

MEMORIAL AND RESOLUTIONS  
OF THE  
**Merchants and Others,**  
OF THE  
TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH, N. H.  
IN RELATION TO  
*The acts restricting the West India trade.*

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MARCH 15, 1822.

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## MEMORIAL, &c.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:*

The memorial of the subscribers, ship owners and others, interested in foreign commerce, in the town of Portsmouth, and state of New Hampshire, respectfully represents:

That, in the year 1817, they addressed a memorial to Congress, in which they set forth the various embarrassments and disadvantages to which they were subjected from the unequal operation of the navigation laws of foreign nations, and praying such relief as the wisdom of Congress might devise.

That, in common with their fellow-citizens of other commercial towns, they witnessed with much satisfaction the measures adopted by the general government, particularly in the acts of Congress of April, 1818, and May, 1820, to retain the carrying trade, as far as possible, for our own vessels, and to prevent the ruinous competition of foreign vessels with our own, in our own ports. That, though your memorialists are in general opposed to commercial restrictions and to discriminating duties between the vessels of one nation and those of another, they deeply feel the injustice as well as the impolicy of granting to foreign nations privileges which they deny to us, and thus in effect offering a bounty to foreign ships at the expense of those of our own country.

That, persuaded as they are, upon principle, of the propriety of our existing navigation laws, it has given them much pleasure to observe their favorable effect upon the tonnage of the United States. It appears, that, in 1818, the amount of American tonnage employed in foreign trade was 755,101, and of foreign tonnage in the ports of the United States 161,413. In 1820, the American tonnage was 861,253, and the foreign 79,200. Thus making in two years an increase of American tonnage of 106,152, and a decrease of foreign tonnage of 82,213 tons. In other words, two years ago  $\frac{21}{100}$  of the trade of the United States was carried on in foreign bottoms, while at present only  $\frac{9}{100}$  is conveyed in foreign ships—a most striking proof of the advantage of these laws.

But there are other considerations connected with this subject, to which your memorialists cannot be insensible, and to which they doubt not your attention has already been directed. The repeal of these laws would add directly to the riches and power and strength of a nation that feels no disposition to meet the United States upon

terms of mutual concession and freedom. Great Britain framed her acts of navigation a century and a half ago, for the purpose, as was avowed at the time, of "clipping the wings of her opulent and aspiring neighbors the Dutch." She has ever since been tenacious of these laws as the great preservative of her commercial marine, and, of course, as the foundation of her naval strength. Our navigation acts were designed to protect our citizens against the operation of this foreign system, and to repeal them at this time, without some reciprocal relaxation on the part of Great Britain, would be, as your memorialists apprehend, to surrender the character as well as the interests of the nation.

Your memorialists, therefore, respectfully pray, that the present system of Navigation laws in the United States may not be abandoned, whatever modifications may be made in their provisions; and, as a brief expression of their opinions and feelings on this subject, they would present the following resolutions which are passed at a numerous meeting of the merchants and ship owners, and others interested in foreign commerce, holden at Portsmouth, on the 18th of February, instant.

*Resolved*, That we have witnessed with entire approbation the measures pursued by the government of the United States, especially in the years 1818 and 1820, for the regulation of our commerce with foreign nations.

*Resolved*, That, in our opinion, the navigation acts of the United States have been highly favorable to our merchants, ship owners, and mariners, by increasing the amount of American tonnage, and favoring the employment of American seamen.

*Resolved*, That the repeal of the navigation acts at the present time would be highly injurious to the commerce of the United States, as it would place the vessels of foreign nations in a more favorable situation for commercial enterprises than those of our own country; and would thus transfer the whole carrying trade to foreign nations, without any reciprocal concessions on their part.

*Resolved*, That a memorial to Congress be prepared, expressing these opinions, and praying that the present system of navigation laws be maintained, unless foreign nations will consent to a mutual relaxation of such prohibitory laws, upon terms of mutual concession.

*Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the Senators and representatives in Congress, from this state, with our request that they use their exertions to carry the same into effect.

JOHN GODDARD, *Chairman*.

SAMUEL LORD, *Secretary*.

Portsmouth, N. H. February, 1822.